DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 210 589 CG 015 614

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TITLE Sex-Role Orientation as a Predictor of Locus of Control.
PUB DATE Aug 81
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (89th, Los Angeles, CA, August 24-26, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Individual Characteristics; *Locus of Control; Measures (Individuals); Multiple Regression Analysis; *Personality Traits; *Sex Differences; *Sex Role
IDENTIFIERS *Bem Sex Role Inventory

ABSTRACT

Since the introduction of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), many studies have attempted to relate masculine and feminine characteristics to various personality dimensions. To determine the relationship between sex-role orientation and locus of control, undergraduate students (101 females and 83 males) completed the BSRI and the Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Scale. Results showed that the higher the masculinity score, the stronger was the internal orientation for females. For males, however, both masculine and feminine scores contributed significantly in determining the relationship between sex-role orientation and locus of control. The more sex-role congruent the male subjects were, the more internally oriented they were. The findings tend to support other research that found the masculine subscale of the BSRI to be more important in determining relationships with other variables than the feminine scale. (Author/RC)

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Sex-Role Orientation as a Predictor of Locus of Control

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The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1974) is designed to assess to what degree an individual has incorporated masculine and feminine characteristics into his/her personality structure. Since the introduction of the BSRI, many studies have attempted to relate this variable to other important personality dimensions. One area of interest for researchers has been to investigate the relationship between sex-role orientation and locus of control (that is, the belief that reinforcement is dependent on forces outside the individual (external control) or are contingent on his/her own behavior (internal control)).

The literature reflects inconclusive results on this topic. Some researchers (Devine and Stillion, 1978; Jones et al., 1978) found a significant relationship between the two variables for males only; results for females were non-significant. These studies concluded that sex-congruent males were more internally oriented than their sex-reversed counterparts. Other authors (Marecek and Frasch, 1977; Minnigerode, 1976) reported significant results for female subjects, indicating that sex-role stereotyped women exhibited a higher degree of externality. Still other studies (Bem, 1977; Chasia and Eyo, 1977; Kondo et al., 1978) found no meaningful relationship between sex-role orientation and locus of control for either sex.

Taken as a whole, the body of literature suggests that males and females who endorse masculine personality traits tend to believe that they have greater control over the things that happen in life, while men and women whose feminine characteristics predominate believe that luck or fate is the primary force. Since many of the studies reported non-significant findings for either one or both sexes, it would seem useful to search for some reasons for these outcomes. The results obtained in several recent studies are summarized in Table 1, which also includes the significant findings of the present investigation.

(insert Table 1 about here)

Table 1
Studies reporting the relationship between locus of control and sex-role orientation

Study	Statistically significant? Males	Females	Scale of sex-role orientation	Scale of locus of control	Statistics used
Present study	yes	yes	BSRI	ANS-IE	Multiple regression
Bem	no	no	BSRI	Rotter	Multiple regression
Chasia & Eyo	N/A	no	Burns scale and Gough scale	Rotter	Pearson correlation
Devine & Stillion	yes	no	Attitudes toward women scale	Rotter	Anova
Jones et al.	yes	no	BSRI	Rotter	Anova
Kondo et al.	no	N/A	PRF Andro Scale	Rotter	Point biserial correlations
Marecek & Frasch	N/A	yes	Goldschmidt's Sympathy for women's lib. scale	ANS-IE	Simple regression, locus of control as independent variable.
Minnegerode	no	yes	BSRI and Att. toward women	Rotter	Pearson correlation

BSRI = Bem Sex-Role Inventory; ANS-IE = Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Scale; Burns Scale = Burns Life Styles for Women Scale; Gough Scale = Gough Brief Feminism Scale.

N/A indicates that the study in question did not use the identified sex.

There appear to be two primary factors to explain the lack of consistency in the results of these experiments. First, different test instruments were used to measure the personality dimensions; second, the original method for statistical manipulation of the data (suggested by Bem), in which respondents were categorized into groups for purposes of analysis, caused some data to be ignored in the calculations. As to the latter point, it has been suggested in more recent papers by Bem and other authors that multiple-regression techniques be used in order to maximize the available information. The present study uses this method for data analysis.

The purpose of this research was to determine whether locus of control could be predicted through multiple regression with the BSRI masculinity and femininity scores as the independent variables, and to display a comparison between these results and those of other studies.

Method

One hundred eighty-four undergraduate students (101 females and 83 males) from George Washington University were administered the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) and the Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Control Scale (ANS-IE).

The BSRI consists of a list of 60 adjectives; 20 are commonly thought of as describing masculine traits, 20 are feminine and 20 are so-called "neutral" items. The respondent rates him/herself on each item using a 7-point scale. If an individual's masculine score is significantly higher than the feminine score, the person is said to endorse a masculine sex-role orientation for him or herself. Conversely, if a person's feminine score is significantly higher than the masculine score, the individual is identified as having a feminine profile. If there is no significant difference between the masculine and feminine scores and both scores are high, the individual is said

to be "androgenous"--equally endorsing masculine and feminine characteristics. Individuals who have balanced but low masculine and feminine scores are labelled "undifferentiated."

The ANS-IE consists of 40 questions which are answered either yes or no. It attempts to measure the degree to which one believes that outcomes in life are due to one's own efforts (internal orientation) as opposed to chance and other factors which cannot be controlled (external orientation). In short, it looks at peoples' perceptions concerning the amount of control they believe they have over the events in their lives.

The ANS-IE was chosen in order to minimize the concept of "powerful political others" present in one of the dimensions of the Rotter scale (Bedeian and Hyder, 1979). The BSRI has been shown to be a valid and reliable instrument for the purpose of measuring sex-role orientation and it was therefore used in the present study. Multiple regression techniques were applied to determine whether significant relationships existed between the two measures. Separate analyses were performed for males and females.

Results

For males, we find a significant ($p<.001$) multiple-regression result; both Bem scales are significant in determining locus of control. The masculine scale contributes significantly at the .001 level with a negative regression coefficient; the female scale produces a positive coefficient with $p<.05$. The interpretation of this result is that the higher the masculinity score and the lower the femininity score (i.e., the more sex-congruent the score) for a male, the more internal he is.

For female subjects, the multiple regression coefficient is also significant ($p<.01$), but there is a dissimilarity in the relative contributions of the masculinity and femininity scales. The masculinity scale yields a

negative coefficient which is significant at the .01 level, but the femininity scale is irrelevant in determining locus of control. Thus the present study shows that androgenous and sex-reversed females are more internally-oriented.

Discussion

This study attempted to address the problem of losing valuable data from the BSRI by adopting Bem's suggestion to use multiple-regression techniques in the data analysis. The results were encouraging, yielding further insight into the interrelationship between sex-role orientation and locus of control. Future research using the Bem scale may be benefitted by the use of multiple regression analysis when results are interpreted.

It should also be noted that our results were in agreement with the findings of several authors (Jones et al., 1978; Antill and Cunningham, 1979; Erdwins et al., 1980) who reported that the masculine subscale of the BSRI was far more important in determining relationships with other variables than the feminine scale. It is suggested that this aspect of the BSRI should be looked at further to determine whether the masculine scale alone is sufficient in understanding sex-role orientation in men and women as it applies to other variables.

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